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ABSTRACT

The Beyond 2000 workshop held in February 1995 was designed to give participants experience in using strategic management techniques, such as critical trend and potential event identification, to examine the future of community colleges. This paper is intended as a guide for implementing similar workshops and summarizes the outcomes of workshop exercises. Following a brief introduction, 16 critical trends identified in the workshop are listed and discussions are provided for the two trends selected for analysis by workshop participants. They are: (1) the increasing use of educational technology; and (2) the demands of the changing job market. Implications are then presented concerning the increasing use of technology, including less money available for other renovations; additional funding needed to purchase up-to-date technology; and the need to train faculty, students, and staff. Related recommendations include assessing the effectiveness of the technology, conducting needs assessments, and increasing partnerships to share costs. Following recommendations related to the changing job market, 20 critical events affecting community colleges identified at the workshop are listed. Discussions of the following 4 events are then presented: universal access to the Internet; elimination of financial aid for students; alternative education providers; and elimination of the Department of Education. The report closes with a description of two Internet resources: the Horizon List and Horizon Home Page, a futures planning database of abstracts describing signals of change affecting education. (KP)

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Proceedings of a *Beyond 2000* Preconference Workshop

Beyond 2000:
Visioning the Future of Community Colleges
The 1995 Inaugural Futures Assembly
February 26-28, 1995
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Critical Trends and Events Affecting the Future of Community Colleges

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We are being bombarded by tumultuous forces for change as we go into the 21st Century: Virtual classrooms, global communications, global economies, telecourses, distance learning, corporate classrooms, increased competition among social agencies for scarce resources, pressure for institutional mergers, state-wide program review and so on. In order to plan effectively in this environment, community college leaders must be able to anticipate new developments on their institutions and curricular programs.

The objective of the *Beyond 2000* pre-conference environmental scanning workshop was to assist participants to develop competency in establishing and maintaining an external analysis capability on their campuses. Although the description of how to do this is available in earlier publications (Morrison, 1992; Morrison & Mecca, 1989; Morrison, Renfro, and Boucher, 1984), the workshop offered an opportunity for participants to experience using several techniques (e.g. critical trend and potential event identification and forecasting events and their impacts) used in anticipatory strategic management. Moreover, the intent was that this experience would enable participants to replicate the workshop on their campuses.

This is a report of the proceedings of the Beyond *2000* workshop. It is intended to summarize the outcomes of exercises, put these exercises in context, so that you may use them as a guide in conjunction with the references cited above when you implement a similar workshop on your campus.

Trends

Trends define the context within which organizations function. Therefore, it is important to identify critical trends, particularly those that are emerging, forecast their future direction, derive their implications for effective planning, and construct plans to take advantage of the opportunities they offer or ameliorate their consequences if they may negatively impact community college education. In trend identification, it is important to look widely in the social, technological, economic, environmental, and political sectors, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Therefore, the trend exercise focused on identifying critical trends that define the context within which community college education functions. Participants were formed into 6-8 person groups. Each group had the following tasks: identify critical trends, select the five most critical ones, select on of these and derive the implications of the trend if it materialized as they thought it might, and then recommend actions that community college leaders should consider in light of this analysis.

The list below includes the most critical trends (with duplications eliminated).

Critical Trends Identified in the Workshop

1. Increasing use technology
2. Expanded learning environment (at home, industry, school)
3. Shift to conservative government
4. Increasing numbers of underprepared students
5. Widening group of haves and have nots (in U.S., globally)
6. Increasing need for cooperation at all levels of education, business, and government
7. Increasing loss in high paying jobs
8. Increasing need for alternative systems of instructional delivery, scheduling, distance learning.
9. Declining resources for community college education

10. Increasing diversity of the student population on campus
11. Increasing immigration
12. Changing public expectations
13. Increasing multi-sector mergers, collaborations, and partnerships.
14. Increasing questioning of the value of community colleges
15. Changing community college organizational structures
16. Increasing community college "boundaries"

Trend Analysis

The trends selected for analysis, their implications, and recommendations as to what community college leaders can do are as follows (note: several groups focused on the implications of information/educational technology).

1. Increasing use of educational technology: implications and recommended actions

Implications

1. Less money available for other building renovations/construction
2. Need for additional funding for up-to-date technology
3. Need to train faculty, students, staff in using the new technologies
4. Increasing numbers of students taking courses from many institutions (and corresponding need to articulate with an increasing number of institutions)
6. Implications for credentialing: will degrees from distance learning programs hold their value? Will degree holders be competent?
7. With less student-student/faculty student interaction, will social skills be lost? How will occupational training programs socialize occupational values?

What should community college educators do?

1. Assess effectiveness of the technology
2. Conduct a cost-benefit analysis
3. Assess consumers' needs/wants
4. Analyze current delivery systems in light of new technologies

5. Assess the extent to which faculty aware of or use information technology in their instruction
6. Plan and implement faculty development in the use of these technologies
7. Increase partnerships with industry and others to share resources
8. Educate funders (regents, legislators)
9. Reallocate resources
10. Work with architects when designing new buildings
11. Keep stakeholders abreast of information technology developments and their implications of instruction
12. Collaborate with developers

2. Changing job market demands: implications and recommended actions

1. Need to educate faculty, students, staff to understand these changes and their implications for the curriculum
2. Need to increase dialogue with employers
3. Need to employ technology in curricular programs
4. Need to explore alternative funding sources
5. Need to focus on outcome measures

Events

Events are unambiguous and confirmable; when they occur, the future is different. Event identification and analysis is critical in anticipatory organizational planning. The event exercise focused on the following tasks:

1. Identifying potential events that, if they occurred, would affect the future of community college education
2. Selecting the top five most critical events
3. Specifying the signals of each of the five most critical events
4. Forecasting the probability and the impact (both positive and negative) of one of these events

5. Recommending actions for community college leaders in anticipation of this event

The most critical events and their signals are specified below:

1. Five states privatize public educational system
2. Balanced budget amendment passed
3. Voucher based EP funding mandated
4. Low-cost voice-activated computers available
5. Republicans achieve legislative dominance in 40 states
6. 80% of community college instructions view themselves as "guides on the side, not as sages on the stage"
7. Affirmative action eliminated
8. Every home, business, and educational organization is connected to the Internet.
9. Proprietary schools reach numerical parity with community colleges
10. Federal funding for education reduced 50%
11. Retirement age increased to age 70
12. Power PC/486 computers with 16 megabyte RAM cost below $600
13. All education costs tax deductible
14. Educational credit for cable courses universally accepted
15. 15% increase in Federal taxes
16. 15% decrease in Federal taxes
17. 20% reduction in public funds for community colleges nationwide
18. Ten states fund selected occupational programs in proprietary schools.
19. Riots occur in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles
20. Community colleges authorized to grant three-year BA degrees

A major point of this exercise is to focus attention of potential events that could affect the future of our organization. Therefore, the event statements need to be specific (i.e., "15% reduction in Federal taxes) as opposed to "Reduction in taxes." By making event statements concise, we can use them productively in estimating their probability and their impact. This was the focus of the probability/impact/implications exercise, described below.

Each group selected one event. Group members first independently estimated the probability of the event occurring within the planning time frame (typically 3, 5, or 10 years) and, if it did occur, its degree of positive an its degree of negative impact on community college education. The task was then as a group to get the reasoning out on the table for disparate forecasts. In essence, the group facilitator asked these questions: What is the reasoning behind a vote that the event is not likely to occur? What is the reasoning behind a vote that the event is highly likely? What is the reasoning behind the vote that the event, if it occurred, would be highly damaging to community education; what is the reasoning behind the vote that if the event occurred, it would not damage community college education at all? And so on.

The events selected for analysis, their median probability (10 year time frame) after discussion, the degree of positive and negative impact, and the recommendations that follow from the analysis are recorded below.

Event Analysis

1. Universal access to the Internet

Signals

1. Historical user growth
2. Decrease in cost of computers
3. Increase in services provided
4. Increase in business applications, and increase in wireless transmissions

Probability/Impact

Median probability: 90%

Positive impact: strong to revolutionary

Negative impact: middle to severe

[privatization of education because of flexibility of Internet;
loss or increase of students, depending on how community colleges react]

Recommended actions

1. Conduct staff training
2. Work closely with businesses
3. Continue specializations we do well
4. Help facilitate access by providing resources to faculty, students, and staff

2. Elimination of financial aid for students

Signal

Contract with America

Probability/Impact

Median probability: 50%

Degree of positive impact: none

Degree of negative impact: moderate to severe

[reduction in enrollment; elimination of poor from the educational process]

Recommended actions

1. Forge more partnerships with industry , business and community
2. Increase emphasis on alternative funding
3. Become more politically active
4. Develop closer ties with alumni
5. Prepare for declining enrollments
6. Counsel with parents and students on funding for education.

3. Alternate education providers

Signals

1. Mind extension university
2. Private services already being offered to students
3. Private companies developing in-house educational opportunities

Probability/Impact

Median Probability: 95%

[No impact statements provided.]

Recommended actions

1. Create partnerships with providers by offering community college expertise, assessment and accreditation
2. Develop and provide alternative systems
3. Develop creative exchanges with educational providers (space, technology, faculty)
4. Decrease dependence on facilities
5. Redefine degrees and credits
6. Redefine where and when learning and work occur
7. Develop policies on student advisement.(what to take, what is appropriate from diverse educational deliverers)

4. Elimination of DOE

Signals

Contract with America

Perceived lack of value-added

Probability/Impact

Median probability: 60%

Degree of positive impact: none

Degree of negative impact: moderate to severe

Recommended actions

1. Create strong relationship with federal level legislators
2. Evaluate dollar impact

Discussion

Establishing a comprehensive environmental scanning system on a campus to inform planning requires a good deal of time from everyone involved in the process. Fortunately, we can take advantage of the information highway and can share resources via *Horizon List* and *Horizon Home Page*. *Horizon List* offers the opportunity to respond to draft articles focusing on emerging trends and potential events (for example, I will insert these proceedings on

the list for discussion when I get home). *Horizon Home Page* has a futures planning database of abstracts describing signals of change in the macroenvironment that can affect education; please review this section and please add to it. You may subscribe to *Horizon List* by sending the following message to listserve@unc.edu: subscribe horizon <yourfirstname> <yourlastname>. You may view and contribute to *Horizon Home Page* by turning your browser to the following URL address: http://sunsite.unc.edu/horizon.

To stimulate and focus discussion of the implications of emerging tends and potential events on your campus, recommend to the chair of your planning committee that she/he order a site license subscription to *On the Horizon*. View each issue of *On the Horizon* as a pump-primer to organizational planning. For example, the chair's cover letter to the first issue should urge planning committee members to consider how the content of particular items in the newsletter affect the institution and to write down their thoughts (or send them to the group via e-mail); their collective thoughts would be used to begin discussion at the next committee meeting.

Before the meeting, the chair could compose a questionnaire identifying those articles in *On the Horizon* that may affect either the organization as a whole or particular curricular programs. He/she should ask committee members to rank-order the most important ones, and follow this rank order for the discussion agenda.

As the committee becomes accustomed to this process, the chair should request members to send articles, notes, or commentary that they encounter in their reading and at conferences about potential developments that could affect the organization. They should use the structure of the newsletter: send information about signals of change in the STEEP (i.e., *social, technological, economic, environmental,* and *political*) categories, particularly on the local and regional levels (*On the Horizon* tends to focus on the national and international levels). The reason for using this structure is that developments in one sector affect developments in other sectors (i.e., a war in the Middle East affects fuel prices everywhere);

therefore, in order to anticipate change, we need to look for developments that may have direct or indirect effects on the organization.

Committee members should examine sources for change in relevant variables (e.g., immigration, price of computers, mood of voters). What change is already taking place? Is there a movement upward or downward? What are the projections? What are the emerging trends (i.e., what combinations of data points—past trends, events, precursors—suggest and support the early stages of a possible trend)? What external events, policies, or regulatory actions would affect or be affected by the projections? They should look for forecasts by experts, and append their own implications section to the emerging issues, critical trends, or potential developments when they send their information items.

The chair should summarize the articles and their implications in the cover letter when sending the next issue of *On the Horizon,* and include a questionnaire asking each committee member to rank the five most important items submitted by the committee or included in the newsletter.

The agenda for the planning meeting should include the top items. At the meeting, focused around these items, committee members should draw out the implications of the potential developments for ongoing organizational and program planning. They may want more information about a particular trend or potential event. In this case, enlist the aid of a research staffer or librarian (who should be on the planning committee anyway).

Regularly circulating information about potential developments and asking committee members to think of their implications reinforces a future-oriented posture in our colleagues. They will begin to read, hear, and talk about this information not only as something intellectually interesting but as information they can use in practical organizational planning.

Conclusion

The preconference workshop was conducted in a restricted time frame. It was, however, sufficient to give you experience in using several basic approaches to transform information into strategic intelligence for your institution. This experience, in conjunction with the references sited earlier, should help you establish and maintain an environmental scanning capability on your campus.

You have other resources available. One of the major reasons for publishing *On the Horizon* is to bring you and your colleagues the expertise and foresight of an exceptional and diverse editorial board. Our objective is to alert you to potential developments and emerging trends that may affect your organization so that you can plan for the future more effectively.

Horizon List and *Horizon Home Page* allow you to participate in and contribute to an on-going dialogue of signals of change in the external environment and their implications for the future of education. Please subscribe to *Horizon List*, browse *Horizon Home Page*, and enter into these important discussions with colleagues all over the world.

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